

ENGAGING DIASPORA PROFESSIONALS

RESEARCH STUDY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is a part of the project “Matching Diaspora Experts with Institutional Needs at Home”, which is implemented by Germin with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The project aims to increase the engagement of diaspora professionals in home countries, and create opportunities for know-how and skills transfer. The population of interest includes professionals from different fields who are part of the Kosovo and Albanian diaspora residing abroad, especially those from Germany.

The study aims to assess the perceptions about circular migration and the professional engagement of the Albanian Diaspora professionals. Throughout the desk research, the topic of emigration contextualized by bringing a historical background of the evolution of Albanian Diaspora, in particular, that of Kosovo and Albania. This part analyzes how the different waves of migration have influenced the creation of diaspora communities and their strong ties with the home countries - countries of origin. The latter is evidenced not only by the historical economic, political, and social contribution but also by the readiness to develop circular migration. Results from this report show that a majority of respondents are ready and committed to offering their contribution to the country of origin.

The report also provides a detailed summary of the key findings from the survey with 921 respondents of Albanian Diaspora on the

same topic, conducted in the second part of January 2020. Findings from the survey are presented in two main sections:

- (1)** General Characteristics and Demographics of the Respondents, as well as their Educational and Professional Background; and
- (2)** Perceptions on Diaspora Professional Engagement; Potential Future Engagement at the Countries of Origin; and Perceptions on Germin’s initiative and Future Commitment.

5 recommendations are given for policy and decision-makers and other stakeholders to increase the engagement of the diaspora in terms of circular migration:

- (1)** Get to know the Albanian diaspora professionals; map, listen and understand;
- (2)** Empower the diaspora groups and organizations;
- (3)** Develop a multi-functional platform that connects diaspora professionals’ profiles with the public and private sector in the countries of origin;
- (4)** Create space for engagement of diaspora professionals in public institutions of Kosovo and Albania, which face a lack of advanced knowledge and skills in key sectors;
- (5)** Improve the coordination between different levels of governance and inter-state institutions, and increase the inclusiveness in the diaspora engagement process.

Introduction



The term ‘diaspora professionals’ refers to well-qualified and skilled people with a migration background who wish to support their country of origin by putting their expertise to good use

,as defined by the Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM).¹ The professional engagement project seeks to create opportunities for knowledge and skills transfer to local institutions and organizations through short-term assignments offered to diaspora professionals with the purpose to positively affect the socio-economic development of countries of origin. In order to achieve these objectives, the project consists of a research study which aims to generate an overall understanding of the perceptions of diaspora professionals for potential engagement in their country of origin and identify areas/sectors for engagement of these professionals. Additionally, in order to design a successful project and achieve common goals, the survey aims to gather the opinions of diaspora professions towards this pilot initiative as well as their recommendations for successful implementation.

This study uses a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative measures to assess the potential for the professional contribution of diaspora in their home countries. The quantitative part consists of a questionnaire administered online with 921 respondents of Albanian Diaspora to gather information about their experiences and perceptions towards potential professional engagement in their countries of origin. In addition, the project includes six in-depth interviews conducted with diaspora professionals to provide more information on the willingness of diaspora to contribute and be engaged with the home countries through circular migration. The interviews provide more insights into the challenges and obstacles towards this engagement and future recommendations that should be taken into consideration from the home countries in establishing further cooperation with diaspora professionals. The report summarizes the findings from the study throughout the subsections below provide a detailed summary of the steps undertaken to complete this research project.

¹"Diaspora Experts". Cimonline.De, 2020. <https://www.cimonline.de/en/html/diaspora-experts.html>.

Background Information

Western Balkan countries have large diasporas with great potential; however, this potential has not been able to be fully explored beyond remittances as financial support. In this regard, not much has been done either by civil society or the private sector. Lack of experience, negative narratives about emigration, and a one-side communication approach are some of the main reasons that impede the professional engagement of diaspora communities with the countries of origin. However, the diaspora's potential is growing, and so is the interest of academia, researchers, organizations, and institutions towards exploring this potential. The latter is important as it infuses discussions that result in policy recommendations, strategies, and practical solutions for diaspora engagement.



Diaspora's knowledge and skills transfer are key in mitigating the negative effects of brain drain and can help the country move towards a knowledge-based society.

However, it is not always realistic to expect diaspora members who have already built a life abroad to return to the countries of origin. As such, attracting diaspora experts to engage professionally, requires a serious and well-planned approach that preserves the individual interests of the members while achieving a bigger common goal.

To build and strengthen this partnership with diaspora professionals, countries must acquire knowledge about their diaspora, not only in terms of numbers and countries of residence (where they are) but also in terms of their educational attainment and professional skills acquired abroad (what they can offer). It is also important to establish a mutual trust to fully engage diaspora professionals as true partners in the development of their countries of origin through multiple programs. Potential diaspora engagement programs that focus on strengthening the capacity of both government institutions and diaspora communities to work with multiple stakeholders. Once these partnerships are established, different methods can be used to mobilize, inspire, and engage the diaspora in supporting the development of their country of origin.

The potential of the diaspora to promote development in their homeland has gained significant interest in recent years. Studies suggest that remittances are an important contributor to the development of the home countries of diaspora communities.² However, the contribution of diaspora aside from remittances extends to entrepreneurship, business and investment in their home countries, together with the capital, technology, technical know-how, and market

²Markova, Eugenia (2010), "Effects of Migration on Sending Countries: lessons from Bulgaria," GreeSE - Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe 35, Hellenic Observatory, LSE. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28438/>.

knowledge³, as well as social remittances, meaning ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities.⁴

As a result, a more focused approach should be put on the potential for growth and development, particularly amongst developing countries as a result of the professional expertise and the experience of their diaspora living in the developed countries. This contribution apart from remittances can come in the form of diaspora members providing their know-how and skills transfer to stay connected to their country of origin and achieve a sense of self-fulfillment. As a result, it is crucial to have a more in-depth insight and conduct a needs assessment to identify the best ways for attracting such cooperation in the future between diaspora members and home countries.

Over the last decades, the diaspora population has almost tripled in the world, with around 250 million people living outside of their countries of origin⁵. For the countries of origin, the main contribution from diaspora communities has come in the form of remittances which has increased the national consumption and increased the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in home countries; however, the diaspora engagement in a more facilitative manner has been short of

potential in most of the countries. Even though there is room for analysis on this matter, one thing that is becoming clearer is that diaspora communities and their engagement with the home countries are an integral part of development.

Diaspora communities living outside of their homelands can increase their contribution in various forms and through different types of engagement. First, diaspora communities can serve as a tool for transferring resources such as knowledge, technical know-how, technology and new ideas which can contribute to economic and social development.⁶ Second, the investment potential of diaspora communities, despite financial gains, is also driven by the emotional attachment to their home countries. Such attachment to contributing to their homeland drives their desire for investment opportunities to sustainable development considering their local knowledge and networks in the country of origin.⁷ And finally, diaspora investments in the form of professional contributions can have a long-lasting impact and serve as an alternative source of financing⁸ for development. In conclusion, there is a high positive impact on diaspora engagement and their skills in the countries of origin which can be achieved through strategic planning for professional cooperation.

³Sharma et al (2011), *Realizing the development potential of diaspora*, United Nations University Press ISBN 978-9280811957 <https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:2532/ebrary9789280811957.pdf>

⁴Levitt, P. (1998). Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion. *The International Migration Review*, 32(4), 926-948.

⁵Uraguchi et al, (2018), *Diaspora Communities as a Driving force for Development: Is there a "Business case"* HELVETAS. <https://bit.ly/2OIYPoo>

⁶De Haas, Hein, (2010), "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective." *International Migration Review* 44, no. 1: 227-64.

⁷Debass, T., & Ardovino, M. (2009). *Diaspora direct investment (DDI): The untapped resource for development*. United States Agency for International Development. USAID publication, website: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADO983.pdf.

⁸Uraguchi et al, (2018), *Diaspora Communities as a Driving force for Development: Is there a "Business case"* HELVETAS.

Albanian Diaspora

General Overview



Albanian diaspora has been playing a significant role in the development and growth of the countries of origin.

Albanian diaspora has been playing a significant role in the development and growth of the countries of origin. Given the historical conditions, diaspora members have been voluntarily organized, creating and maintaining connections with the homeland, despite unfavorable conditions throughout the years.

The size of Kosovo diaspora, although an official number remains unknown, is estimated to be around 800,000 people⁹. It is estimated that nearly one in every third Kosovar today lives abroad. While, in Albania according to INSTAT, Albanians emigrant's stock is estimated to be around 1.6 million people.¹⁰The main countries where Kosovo's and Albania's Diaspora reside are Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, and The United States of America, while other countries include Sweden, The United Kingdom, France, Austria, and Belgium with smaller numbers.

Diaspora's engagement has been of great importance for Kosovo, Albania, and other countries in the region. Today's Kosovo diaspora is a great economic and social contributor. Financial remittances in Kosovo composed 10 percent to 15 percent of the country's GDP in the last previous years. A similar

impact but with a lower percentage (around 10%) of remittances in the GDP is recorded in Albania according to the Bank of Albania.¹¹According to the UNDP, 25 percent of Kosovo households receive remittances constantly.¹²Given the high unemployment, remittances have maintained socio-economic stability. Data from the Central Bank in Kosovo shows that remittances amounted to around 852 million euros for the year 2019¹³, similar to 2018. These amounts count only registered transactions through various financial channels, since it is estimated that the Kosovo Diaspora brings around 2 billion euros yearly to the country's economy through spending during holidays as well as direct investments in Kosovo. Consequently, the role of Diaspora in promoting investment opportunities, capital inflows, and development is further explored in this report.

Taking this into account as well as the great economic, intellectual and cultural potential of diaspora communities, there have been growing expectations and planning among policymakers and development specialists to explore this role further and increase their contribution. Literature shows that migration from the home country to another might have a positive impact on the home country in terms of reduced poverty, promotion of employment, new economic activities, increased trade and investment as well

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ "Diaspora e Shqipërisë në Shifra". Instat.Gov.AL, 2019. <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6547/diaspora-2019.pdf>.

¹¹ "Remitancat: Një Mbështetje Për Zhvillim". Bank of Albania, 2018. https://www.bankofalbania.org/rc/doc/Remitancat_Revista_11930.pdf.

¹² "Kosovo Remittance Study". United Nations Development Programme, 2012. https://www.undp.org/content/dam/kosovo/docs/Remittances/KRS2012_English_858929.pdf.

¹³ "Kosovo | Remittances | Economic Indicators". Ceicdata.Com. Accessed 21 January 2020. <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/kosovo/balance-of-payments-remittances-by-channel/remittances>.

increased consumption and tourism development¹⁴. Studies showed that around 56 percent of the diaspora population was between 20 and 50 years old, which consists of a skilled labor community who can provide remittances to the home country¹⁵. As a result, the Kosovo diaspora community living abroad can generate many positive impacts on the country.

Kosovo's Diaspora

The first phase of emigration is considered the period before 1989, which was characterized by the movement of unskilled young men from rural areas in Kosovo to Germany or Switzerland in the pursuit of work opportunities. This wave captures those who went to other countries as guest workers in the 1960s to financially support their families by sending money back home and invest in their houses¹⁶. The flow of migration somehow slowed in the 1970s when Kosovo gained autonomy within the former Yugoslavia and new jobs were established by the public sector and socially owned enterprises.¹⁷ At this point, the economic and political situation in the country was more stable and therefore fewer Kosovo Albanians were leaving the country in search of better opportunities.

The second wave of emigration from Kosovo was during the years 1989-1997 when the situation in the country deteriorated and more than 150,000 Kosovar workers were dismissed from the public sector, mainly 'socially' owned enterprises. Considering the

The process of different waves of emigration from Kosovo and Albania throughout the years has had a significant effect on the structure of the population in the country with around 17% of Kosovo population currently living abroad, and almost 40% of Albania population. There have been four identified phases of emigration from Kosovo in history.

economic and political situation during these years, many skilled and educated young men from Kosovo emigrated to Western Countries to seek work opportunities and escape from the military service of Yugoslavia.¹⁸

Considering that their families were left behind, emigration to these countries was a way to find jobs to financially maintain the family and improve their well-being through remittances. For many members of Kosovo Diaspora, the purpose of their emigration has remained the same, with many working to support their families and investing in their homelands with the hope that one day they might return to continue their lives near their families.

The third wave of migration was during the conflict years of 1998/1999 here more than 800,000 Kosovar citizens sought refuge in Albania, Western Europe, and the United States of America.¹⁹

The nature of this emigration wave was based on emergency needs in seeking security during the conflict area, and after 1999

¹⁴Dahiden, Warner (2009) Diaspora as a Driving Tool for Development in Kosovo, Myth or Reality Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Forum for Democratic Initiatives https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/laender/re-source-183043_EN.pdf

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶Arenliu et al (2014) Kosovo Human Development Report (2014) United Nations Development Programme, Swiss Cooperation Office Kosovo https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1079594/1226_1418899302_undp-kosovo.pdf

¹⁷Nushi, A., & Alishani, A. (2012). Migration and development: the effects of remittances on education and health of family members left behind for the case of Kosovo. *Analytical*, 5(1), 42-57.

¹⁸Arenliu et al (2014) Kosovo Human Development Report (2014) United Nations Development Programme, Swiss Cooperation Office Kosovo https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1079594/1226_1418899302_undp-kosovo.pdf

¹⁹Ibid

many migrants returned resulting in a rapid return of the displaced population.

The final migration wave is recorded post-1999, where many Kosovo Albanians were going to the Western countries to reunite with their families. Other unskilled and undereducated youth migrants were migrating to more developed countries using irregular migration, while other educated and highly skilled individuals were getting temporary legal migration through study programs or work arrangements.²⁰ As a result, these four identified waves of migration in history have contributed to the increase in the share of Kosovo Diaspora in Western countries, which have had a great impact on the country.

Even though visa liberalization remains an issue for citizens of Kosovo, and that they are required a Schengen visa to travel in any of the European Union countries, this has not slowed migration. The data from Eurostat on population fall²¹ for Eastern European countries between 2007 and 2018, shows that Kosovo has experienced an estimated 15.4 percent population fall. This is considered to be the largest fall from the other Eastern European countries. The highest number was recorded at the beginning of 2015 were around 42,000 thousand Kosovars had applied for asylum in the EU while in 2016 more than 21,000 Kosovars applied for asylum as shown by Eurostat Data.²²

The estimations also show that around 144,330 Kosovar citizens have illegally entered the EU. Another study published in 2019 by the European Policy Institute of Kosovo shows that around 203,330 Kosovar citizens left the country and applied for asylum in different countries in the European Union.²³

The statistics from Eurostat show that the highest number of Kosovar citizens acquired a residence in Germany (47%), Italy (12%), France and Austria (9% each), and Slovenia (7%). This reveals that one in fifth Kosovars is seeking to leave Kosovo by any means, and the main reason is to find work opportunities²⁴. Considering that the unemployment rate in Kosovo is 31.4 percent and more than half of youth are unemployed, many citizens seek new opportunities in other countries to find jobs and better working conditions in supporting their families and themselves financially.

²⁰Ibid

²¹Walker Sh. (2019), Eastern Europe's extraordinary revival, The Guardian <https://bit.ly/39faBQK>

²²Rolandi F., Elia Ch, (2019) Escape from the Balkans, European Data Journalism, Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa <https://bit.ly/2OKp1PD>

²³Ibid

²⁴Ibid

Albania's Diaspora

The migration of Albanians abroad has persisted continuously throughout the years. It is documented at least since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the departure of a large mass of the people from territories populated with Albanians. After the conquest of the Balkan Peninsula by the Ottoman Empire and the death of Skanderbeg, resulting in migratory waves to southern Italy, Greece, the coast of Dalmatia (today's southwest Croatia) and elsewhere. The most prominent model of Albanian settlements created from this migration wave is that of the Arbëresh community located in Sicily and Calabria, Italy. In the following centuries, until the creation of the independent Albanian state, in 1912, the migration processes continued in the form of "internal" movements from the Albanian territories to other regions of the Ottoman Empire, like today's Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Bulgaria, and Romania.

The formation of the Albanian state changed the migration routes for Albanians. Emigration to Turkey continued again, mainly because of the pre-existed ties and relations with those who had settled there earlier. However, Albanians now were oriented towards the United States, Latin America, Australia, and in a more limited number in any European countries (France, Austria, Italy).

A special contingent during this time was political emigration, which left Albania as a result of its opposition to the King Zog regime and after the end of World War II. In the period 1945-1990, almost complete extinction of emigration was observed, because of the isolation and the border's closure by the communist regime.

Since the end of the communist regime (1990), about 25% of the total population, which reflects about 35% of the active population, has left the country. In the beginning, the trend of Albanian emigrants was oriented to Greece and Italy, but over the years it has been moved towards the most developed countries of Western Europe (Germany, Holland, Scandinavian countries, Great Britain, etc.), as well as the United States of America and Canada.²⁵

Analyzing the movement of people from Kosovo and Albania in the last few years, a new wave of migration seems to have risen for different reasons based on the economic situation and personal aspirations for better futures.

²⁵ Albanians in the World, Ministry For Europe And Foreign Affairs, accessed 21 May 2020, <https://bit.ly/2ZOcDEG>

Survey Methodology

Questionnaire Design

To collect the opinions and perceptions of diaspora communities about circular migration and professional engagement opportunities in their home country,

“**Germin designed a structured quantitative questionnaire conducted with 921 respondents from the diaspora.**”

This questionnaire gathered general information about the profile of diaspora professionals, employment and profession in the country of residence, area of expertise, skills and qualifications as well as their proneness to engage in the future with different

professional prospects of contribution to the home country through their know-how and transfer of skills. In addition, the questionnaire aims to identify what opportunities can best attract diaspora professionals to engage in transferring knowledge and skills to the home country and thus contribute to the country’s development in different fields.

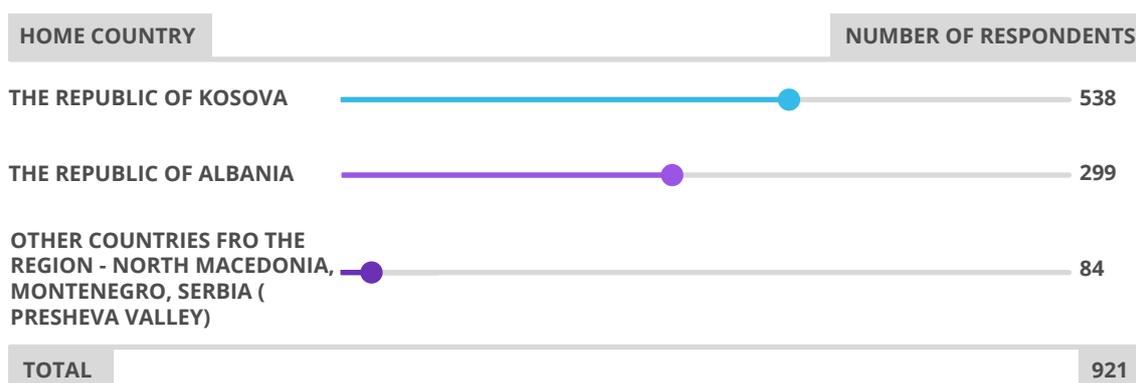
Upon finalization of the questionnaire in Albanian language, it was also translated in English using back-translation. The questions were checked to ensure the essence is captured and that their meaning is the same in both languages.

Sample Design

The populations of interest for this study are diaspora professionals residing in different countries, who moved out of their countries of origin - home countries (mainly from Kosovo and Albania, including other countries from the region where Albanians live) and have professional occupations in different fields. In order to reach the population of interest, Germin targeted the networks of diaspora communities through online

platforms sharing the survey link on their official website (www.germin.org) as well as social media pages (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter). The survey was administered online, collecting information from 921 respondents to assess their opinions and perceptions for potential professional engagement in their home countries and future opportunities for professional contribution in the short-term and long-term.

Table 1. Sample of respondents from Survey



Data Collection

Upon finalization and translation in Albanian and English, the questionnaire was coded in the *SurveyMonkey* platform and tested to ensure that the completion runs smoothly. After testing the survey, the questionnaire was edited in both languages in terms of the formulation of questions and other technical modifications to the format of the questionnaire.

In administering online questionnaires, it is important to ensure that the questions have a logical flow, are easy to understand and complete. For this project, the number of questions and time to complete the survey were considered to ensure the accuracy of responses and the delivery of insightful information. The survey was administered online from January 15, 2020, to January 30, 2020.

It is important to emphasize that the findings from the survey are not generalizable to entire diaspora communities living abroad but rather targets the group of professionals in different fields.

Considering that the survey was administered online, there are certain limitations to the generalization of results to entire communities or populations in the form of sampling and non-response bias.

Sampling Bias: The online administration of the study inevitably restricts the equal selection of targeted population to being interviewed. More active online users will be continuously more exposed to the survey's availability as compared to those who are not actively online or do not have internet access or technology ²⁶. In this case, demographics like age and income of the respondents also are important to consider. In order to minimize sampling bias, Germin has improved the visibility of the survey through multiple channels including social media, survey websites, and emails.

Nonresponse Bias: Apart from the sampling bias, it is important to understand that the respondents participating in this survey can be systematically different from the non-responders in different parameters²⁷. In this case, the participants might have been interested in the topic and therefore dedicated their time to complete the survey, as opposed to other groups. A larger response rate, in this case, would help offset such bias and results can be viewed in light of different demographic characteristics for more insights.

²⁶ Sax, L.J., Gilmartin, S.K. & Bryant, A.N (2003). Assessing Response Rates and Nonresponse Bias in Web and Paper Surveys. *Research in Higher Education* 44, 409-432.

²⁷ Ibid

Quality Control and Data Cleaning

Online administration of the questionnaire is a convenient and time-efficient method to reach the population of interest, in this case, the diaspora professionals, considering that it allows us to gather information remotely from the respondents who live in different countries. However, in completing online surveys, the drawback can usually be the quality of responses which might affect the validity of the study's findings. The quality control was conducted throughout survey administration to 'flag' responses that needed data cleaning and ensure there are no problems with the questionnaire.

In order to ensure that the survey accurately captured the information from the population of interest, rigorous data cleaning was conducted for many reasons including poor verbatim responses which come through speeding, irrelevant responses that do not match the questions asked, mistakes in answering correctly, inconsistent responses in different questions (logic questions), missing data and other errors in the dataset. This process ensures the accuracy of the findings and prepares the dataset for analysis.

Data Analysis

After the data cleaning is complete, the data were prepared for analysis using SPSS software. The analysis provides descriptive and inferential statistics, presenting the findings in charts using Excel and Infogram.com for visualization into the final report. In addition, the analysis

the analysis used different cross-tabulations among questions as well as other demographic variables of the respondents to capture the necessary information conforming to the study objectives. A final report on the survey findings is provided in the chapters below.

Interviews

In order to gain more insights from diaspora professionals and their perceptions for future engagement in their homeland, this study included in-depth interviews with diaspora professionals. Upon the findings from the survey, an interview guideline was prepared with different questions to gain more insights into the perceptions of the diaspora for professional contributions in different ways. The interviews were conducted through Skype with six (6) different stakeholders. An Informed Consent Form was signed before the interview by both the interviewer and the interviewees, providing the latter with sufficiently detailed information on the study so that they could make

an informed, voluntary, and rational decision to participate. Out of six interviewees, four are originally from Kosovo, one from Albania and one from Montenegro. All of them live in European countries, except one who lives in the US. All six (6) of them have different professional backgrounds. The methodology selection of the interviewees was based on terms of expertise in order to have diversity in this regard and avoid biased responses when it comes to the relevance of economic sectors' potential in the engagement with home countries. Their responses are added as citations throughout the various parts of this report, depending on the relevance to the issues and topics addressed by the survey.

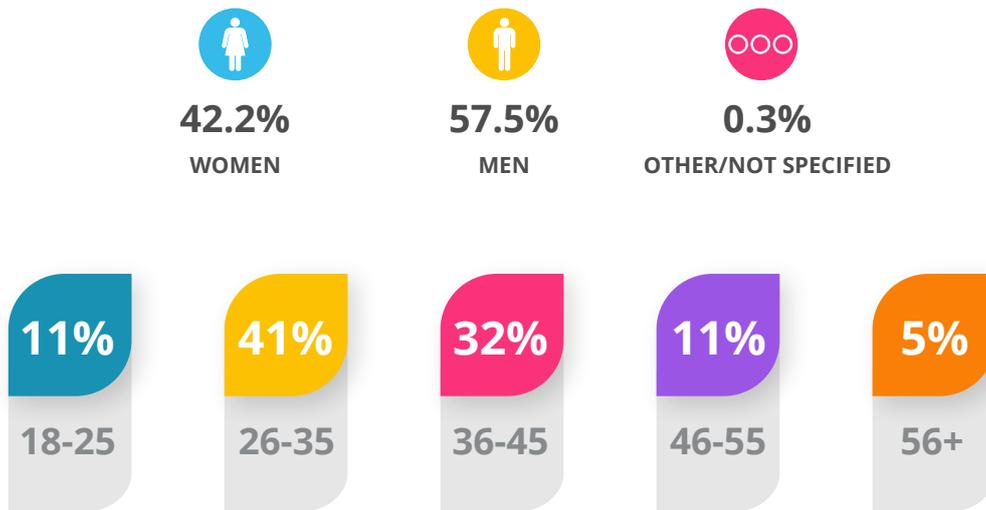
Survey Results

General Characteristics of the Diaspora Professionals who participated in the survey

This section of the report presents the findings from the study conducted with professionals from Albania and Kosovo residing abroad. The survey was administered online through Survey Monkey consisting of 30 questions in total to get more in-depth information about the professional sphere and the potential to

engage in the initiative “Engagement of Diaspora Professionals in Country of Origins”. The survey was filled out from 921 respondents; 58% were men and 42% women. In terms of the age group, most of the respondents belonged to the age group of 26-35 years old (41%) and 36 to 45 years old (32%).

Figure 1. Demographic data of the respondents



The country of origin for more than half of the respondents was Kosovo (58%), followed by

Albania (32%), North Macedonia (6%), and other countries in the region.

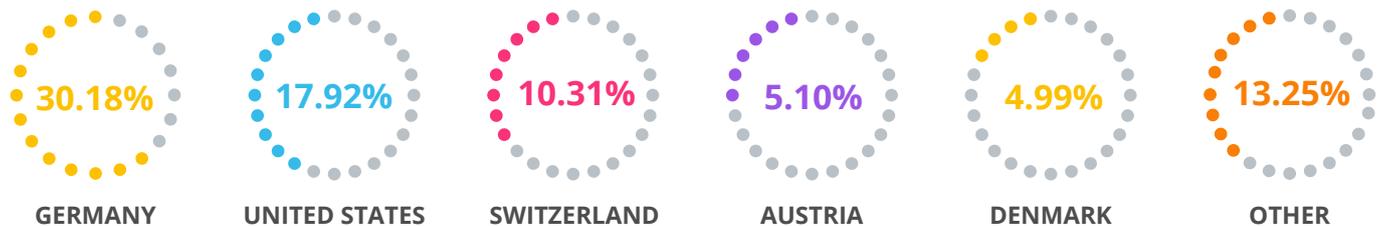
Figure 2. Countries of origin of the respondents



Around 30 percent of the respondents are currently living in Germany, around 18 percent are living in the United States, and 10 percent in Switzerland.

The other respondents are currently residing in Austria (5%), Denmark (5%), United Kingdom (5%), Italy (4%) and other countries provided in the chart below.

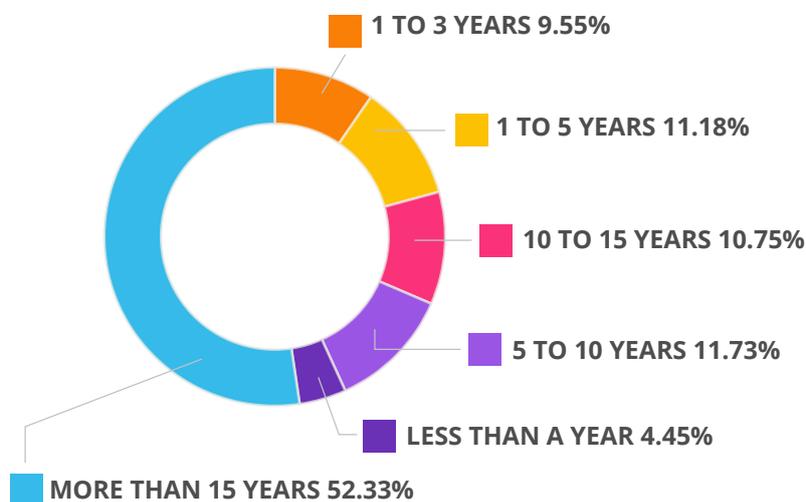
Figure 3. Countries of residence of the respondents



Most diaspora professionals surveyed have been living outside their country of origin for more than 15 years (52%). Around 23 percent of them have been residing in another

country from 5 to 15 years now, while 11 percent have been living abroad from one to five years. Only four percent of the respondents have been part of the diaspora for less than a year.

Figure 4. How many years have you been living out of your country of origin?



An important component to understand diaspora ties with the home country is the number of visits per year. The findings from the survey reveal that almost half of the respondents visit their country of origin at least once within the year (45%) followed by

another quarter of them who visit the country at least two times within the year (25%). A considerable share of respondents visits their home countries three or more times within the year; whereas, only five percent of them reported to never come back for a visit to their countries of origin - home countries.

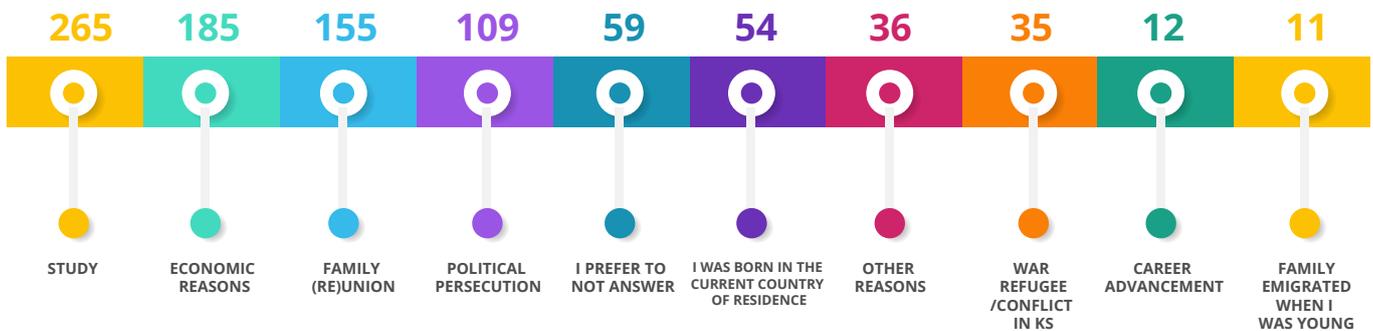
Figure 5. How many times within a year do you visit your country of origin?



The most common reasons for migrating were for studying, economic reasons, family reunion, and political situation in Kosovo during the war. Around one-third percent of the respondents left to study in another country, while 20 percent migrated due to economic reasons (such as finding employment). Interviews with diaspora professionals reveal that study opportunities abroad were a pull factor even for young generations during the 90s, at a time when a push factor was the

forced closure of the University of Prishtina by the Serbian regime²⁸. For 17 percent of the sample, the primary reason for migration was a family reunion with other members who lived in Diaspora, while 12 percent left from political persecution in their home country. Other reasons for leaving the country of origin included being a war refugee during the time of conflict, emigrating with the family when they were young, or pursuing better career opportunities for career advancement.

Figure 6. What was the primary reason for leaving your country of origin?



Furthermore, interviews with diaspora professionals revealed that families who left Kosovo during the time of conflict or because of social persecution have settled in countries abroad and built a life there.

Half of the Diaspora survey respondents reported having citizenship in the country of residence (50%) while a quarter of them have

a permanent residence permit (25%) and 18 percent have a temporary residence permit. Only one percent are asylum-seekers in the country of residence while six percent of the respondents are actually pursuing their studies in a Master's or Doctorate program outside their country of origin.

²⁸ Dobruna, Kujtim (2020), interview taken by L.Krasniqi, on 24 February, 2020, via Skype.

Figure 7. What is your civil status in the country of residence?



The second generation of these families is reluctant to return to Kosovo for many reasons including the lack of political stability in the country, corruption, bad governance, and abusive approach towards public resources . Mimoza Murati, a student in Copenhagen (Denmark) says that even though her parents were those who fled Kosovo because of the war and they are settled very well in Denmark now, she would be willing to return to Kosovo, but the lack of political stability in the

country, corruption, bad governance and abusive approach towards public resources²⁹ are among the reasons that keep her continuing the life abroad³⁰.

The majority of diaspora professionals who completed this survey reported being fluent in speaking and writing in Albanian (85%) or have a good level (10%). A smaller percentage of the respondents had an intermediary level of speaking or writing in Albanian.

²⁹ Murati, Mimoza (2020), interview taken by L.Krasniqi, on 24 March, 2020, via Skype.

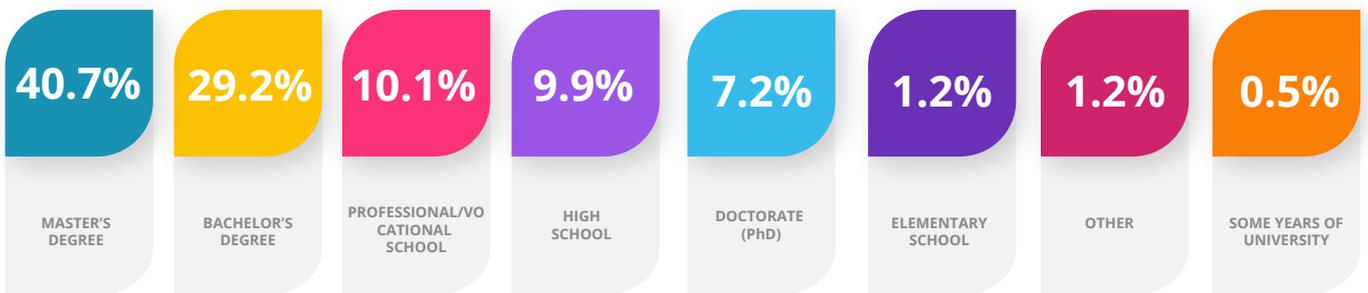
³⁰ Murati, Mimoza (2020), interview taken by L.Krasniqi, on 24 March, 2020, via Skype.

Education and Professional Background

When it comes to education, around 41 percent of the respondents claimed to have a Master’s Degree while seven percent have or are finishing their Doctorate studies. Around 29 percent have a Bachelor’s degree in a

specific field while one percent have only completed some years of university. Around 10 percent have completed professional/vocational school and another 10 percent have completed high school education.

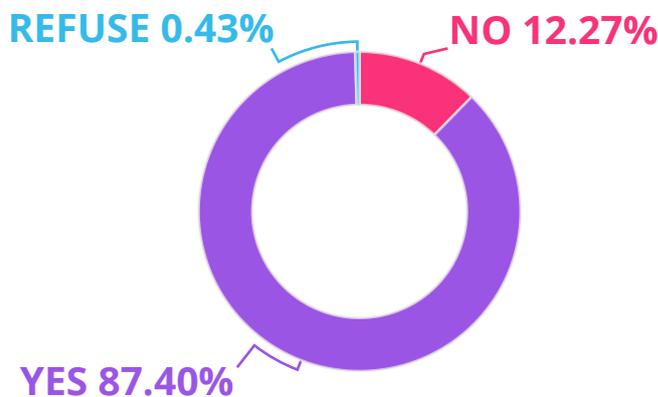
Figure 8. What is your highest level of education?



The majority of respondents residing outside of their home country are currently working

(87%) compared to 12 percent who do not have a job at the moment.

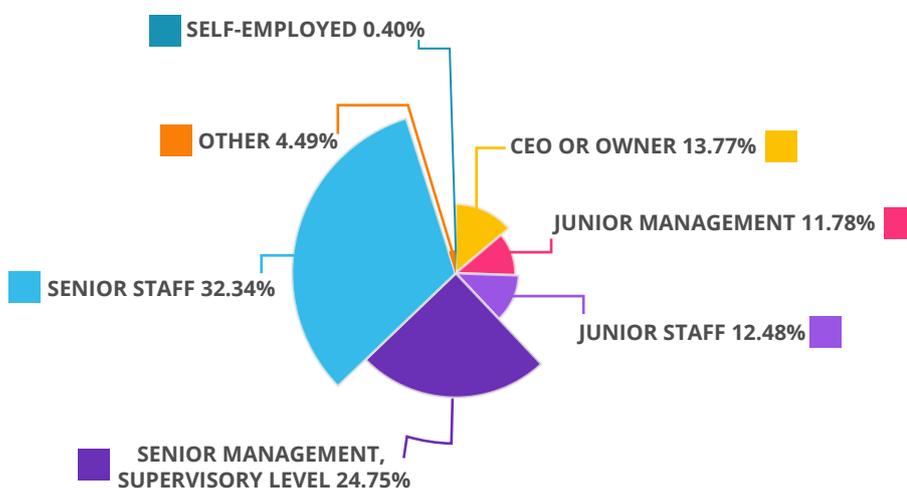
Figure 9. Are you currently working?



Around a third of those who are currently working (32%) are engaged as senior staff while a quarter are working senior management/supervisory level jobs (25%). Around 14 percent of the respondents reported being CEOs or business owners while around 24 percent are either Junior staff or Junior management. It is interesting to note that most respondents are in senior positions.

This means that these people have access to important networks and markets, which have not been adequately assessed by countries of origin. Kujtim Dobruna, an economist and entrepreneur in Vienna, states that there is an extraordinary potential among the Diaspora that remains untapped - in terms of human rather than financial resources³¹.

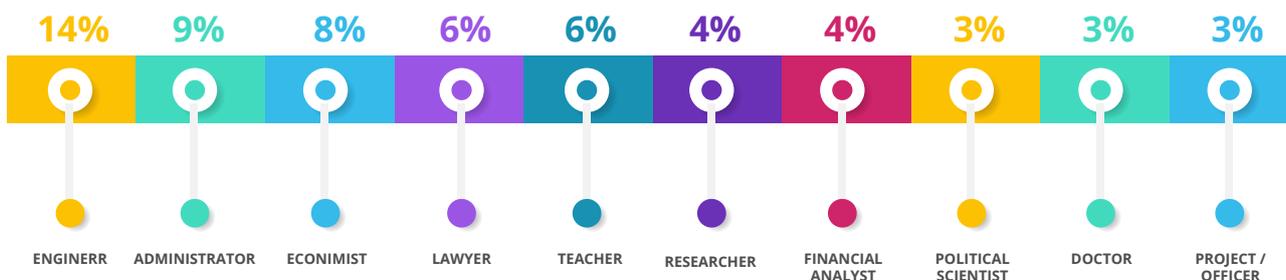
Figure 10. Current job position



The primary occupations and professions differ for diaspora professionals participating in this survey. Around 14 percent are Engineers, nine percent are working Administrative jobs, eight percent are economists, six percent are lawyers, six percent are teachers.

Other occupations include researcher, financial analyst, political scientist, professor, doctor, architect, nurse, and other professions.

Figure 11. Professional background

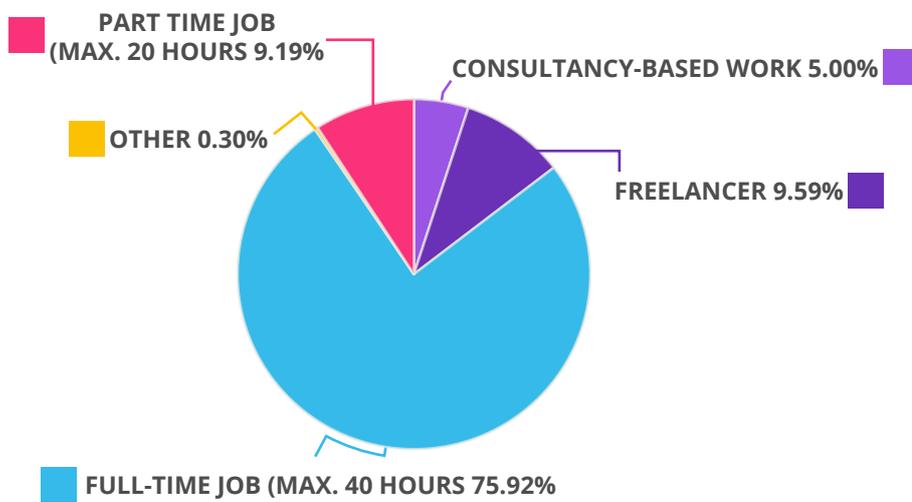


³¹ Dobruna, Kujtim (2020), interview taken by L.Krasniqi, on 24 February, 2020, via Skype.

The majority of respondents are working full-time jobs (40 hours per week) (76%), while 10 percent are working as freelancers and 5 percent are committed to consultancy-based work

consultancy-based work (5%) which allows them to have a more flexible working schedule. Additionally, around nine percent of the respondents are working part-time jobs, committing to a maximum of 20 hours per week.

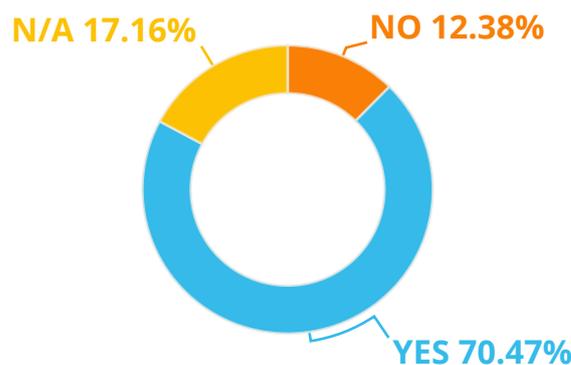
Figure 12. Describe your working hours?



When asked whether their current job matches their qualification and skills, the majority said 'yes' (85%) as compared to the other 15 percent of respondents who do not believe their job is a good match with their actual qualifications. The group who believes their jobs do not match their qualifications

and skills mentioned various reasons including foreign language being a barrier to their integration in the resident country (22%), lack of legal status to work in their field (19%), lack of social networks and connections (15%) and other reasons.

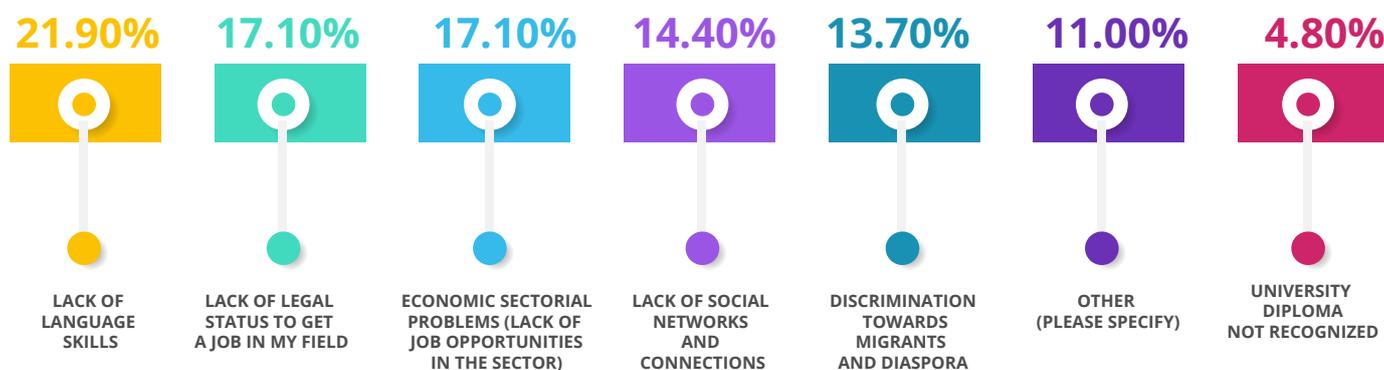
Figure 13. Does your current job match your qualifications?



For 22 percent of them, foreign language is a barrier toward finding a job that matches their qualifications, while 19 percent lack the legal status that would allow them to work in their field. Ermal Vejsa, sociologist living in Vienna, Austria, believes that considering initial goals for professional development, he could do more.

But, as a person who emigrated abroad to study with self-financing and started a life with a lot of unknowns in a foreign country, he stands very pleased with his achievements. He adds that this is primarily due to unwavering desire and will, but also thanks to the opportunities that a country such as Austria provides.³²

Figure 13. 1. If not, why?



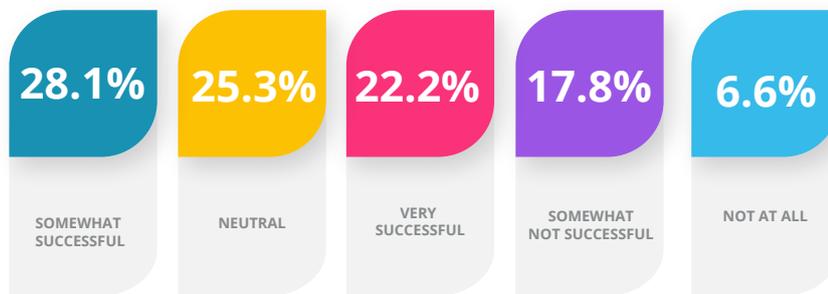
³² Vejsa, Ermal (2020), interview taken by S.Bejtullahu, on 26 February, 2020, via Skype.

Perceptions on Diaspora Professional Engagement

This section of the report focuses on assessing the professional expertise provided by Diaspora professionals in the past and their tendency for future engagement. The questionnaire starts by assessing the individual beliefs of the participants on success had they not migrated from their home countries.

Half of the respondents believe they would be very/somewhat successful if they had not migrated abroad. There are balanced views between those who are neutral and others who believe they would be somewhat not successful or not at all if they did not leave their home country.

Figure 14. How successful do you think you/your family would be if you had not migrated from your country?



The majority of those who believed to share a good rate of success had they not migrated, also share the same beliefs, that they would be very/somewhat successful if they were to return (65%) whereas more than a quarter of respondents believe they would not be as successful (27%). Around 20 percent of the respondents who held neutral views on their success had they

not migrated, believe they would be very/somewhat successful if they were to return, and the same number believes the opposite. On the other hand, more than half of those who believe they would have been somewhat/not successful if they did not migrate, believe the same rate of success if they were to return (53%).

Figure 15. How successful do you think you/your family would be if you were to return to your country (given their responses to the previous question “How successful do you think you/your family would be if you had not migrated from your country?”)



Meanwhile, our interviewees give different opinions regarding success if they would not have emigrated, or if they would have returned to the country of origin. Lirjetë Avdiu, currently living in Vienna, Austria, states that

“I would have tried, but I do not know if I would have been successful if I would stay in my home country. I would not have the opportunities that Austria has offered me to develop in the right professional direction or then the opportunity to join networks of professionals with whom I can communicate, create, and build something.”³³

Kujtim Dobruna, another diaspora professional, believes that “with the education completed abroad he would have been successful if returned.”³⁴ However, he adds that in addition to the educational aspects, there are several other elements such as the interpersonal, and professional skills and networking, experience, etc., which would influence the professional career in both home and abroad.

Jetmira Kaziu, another Albanian professional living in Boston, US, argues that if she had the right connections in politics, she would probably be financially better in Albania than she is now in the US, but not more successful. In this regard, she adds.

“I work with a company in Albania currently, which are my clients. But, if I was living in Albania, I would have probably been one of their employees.”³⁵

Another topic that we touch with this study is the extent to which diaspora professionals have been engaged with countries of origin/home countries through any activities or projects in recent years. The majority of respondents have not contributed or worked

in their home country as an outside expert, in comparison to 24 percent of others who did. Out of those who have contributed to the home country as an outside expert at some point (n=159), 56 percent were from Kosovo, and 35 percent were from Albania.

Figure 16. Have you been engaged with the countries of origin as a diaspora professional?



³³ Avdiu, Lirjetë (2020), interview taken by L. Krasniqi, on 2 March, 2020, via Skype.

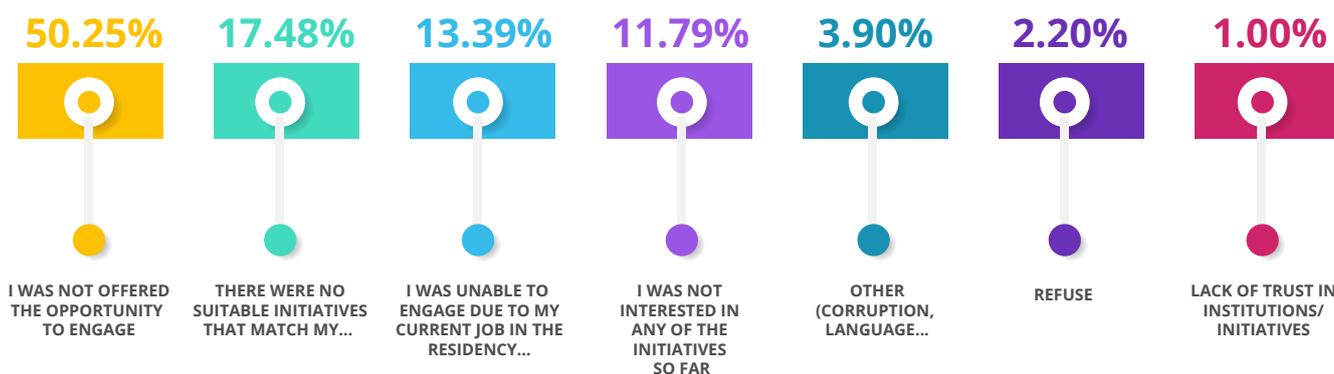
³⁴ Dobruna, Kujtim (2020), interview taken by L. Krasniqi, on 24 February, 2020, via Skype.

³⁵ Kaziu, Jetmira (2020), interview taken by L. Krasniqi, on 24 February, 2020, via Email.

Half of those who did not engage reported that they were never offered such opportunities or roles (50%) and around 17 percent declared that there were no suitable initiatives to match their expertise. For others,

their current job in the country of residence prevented them from engaging as outside experts in their home country (13%) while others were not interested in any of the initiatives so far (12%).

Figure 16.1 If not, why?



The majority of the respondents claimed that they have not received any invitation to

contribute to their home country, as compared to 12 percent of those who have.

Figure 17. Have you ever received any invitation to be engaged professionally at the countries of origin?



Eleonit Ismajli, a young professional living in Zurich, Switzerland, argues that

“beyond the lack of proper opportunities and initiatives, one of the reasons for the lack of engagement of diaspora professionals to the countries of origin is that some previous platforms/initiatives have not been sufficiently serious or have had political setbacks/agendas.”³⁶

³⁶ Ismajli, Eleonit (2020), interview taken by L. Krasniqi, on 20 February, 2020, via Skype.

According to him, this has created skepticism among professionals when it comes to professional engagement with the homeland. However, he adds that there is an extraordinary great will in the Albanian diaspora, especially in Switzerland, to engage in countries of origin.³⁷

On this topic, the survey asked respondents to identify what would incentivize them to engage as an expert in their country of origin.

The most frequently chosen options that would serve as incentives for diaspora engagement were seriousness of initiatives/organizers (62%), working in projects related to their field of expertise (56%), financial rewards (27%), the opportunity provided to engage in their hometown (26%), the flexibility of the working hours and their commitment (22%), some sort of acknowledgment for their contribution (17%) and working in projects for a positive impact in the country of origin.

Figure 18. What would incentivize them to engage as an expert in their country of origin?



Regarding this topic, one of the interviewees thinks that in addition to incentives towards diaspora professionals, there should be mutual agreements between the countries of origin and the countries where the diaspora lives, for temporary, and/or long-term skills and knowledge transfer.³⁸

Lirjetë Avdiu suggests that it is very important to have coordination or organization of policies when it comes to diaspora's professional engagement. She further argues that there should be an assessment of the needs and

demands of the countries of origin in terms of fields that have a deficit of the advanced expertise, which would then be harmonized with the "supply" from the diaspora.³⁹ Another interviewee states that "Kosovo should offer more reasons to young people (especially) in the diaspora to visit Kosovo, in addition to vacations and recreation activities. Being in Kosovo more often, and for more reasons, the likelihood of engaging professionally they would be higher."⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Vejsa, Ermal (2020), interview taken by S. Bejtullahu, on 26 February, 2020, via Skype.

³⁹ Avdiu, Lirjetë (2020), interview taken by L. Krasniqi, on 2 March, 2020, via Skype.

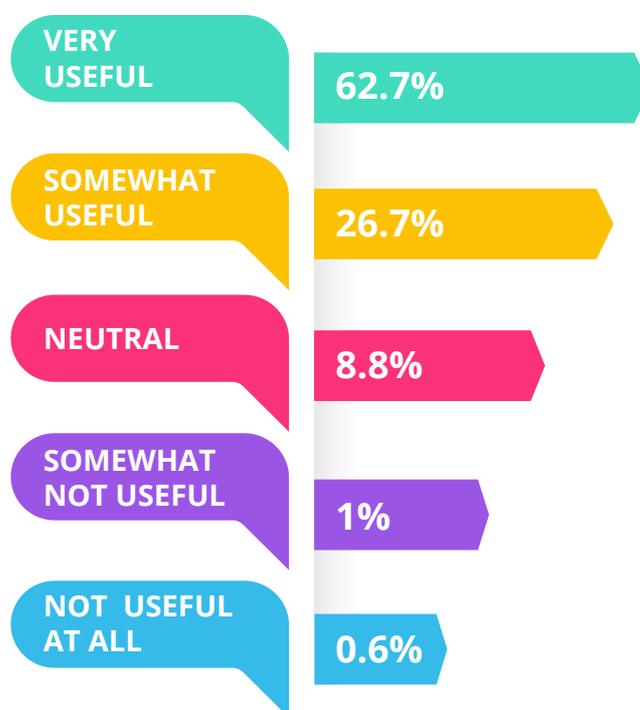
⁴⁰ Murati, Mimoza (2020), interview taken by L.Krasniqi, on 24 March, 2020, via Skype.

Potential Future Engagement at the Countries of Origin

Almost all the survey participants believe their skills can be very/somewhat useful to the development of their country of origin (90%). Around nine percent of the respondents had

neutral views on this matter, while only two percent of the respondents believe that their skills could not have a major contribution.

Figure 19. Do you believe that your skills would be useful to the development of the country of origin?



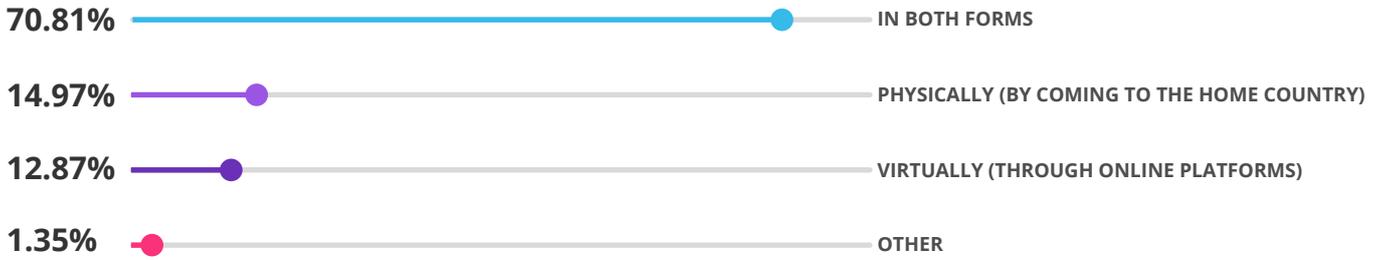
Eleonit Ismajli emphasizes that one of the reasons he had in mind when deciding on the major of his studies, was the program's relevance with his potential engagement with Kosovo.⁴¹

Regardless of having been invited or not to work as an outside expert in the country of origin, the survey aims to assess the interest of diaspora professionals to contribute in the future as experts in different fields.

When asked about how they would be able to provide such a contribution if offered the opportunity, the majority would be able to physically engage by visiting the home country or virtually through online platforms. This finding of the survey is significant as it shows an instant interest in commitment in any form for contribution and positive impact in the country of origin.

⁴¹ Ismajli, Eleonit (2020), interview taken by L. Krasniqi, on 20 February, 2020, via Skype.

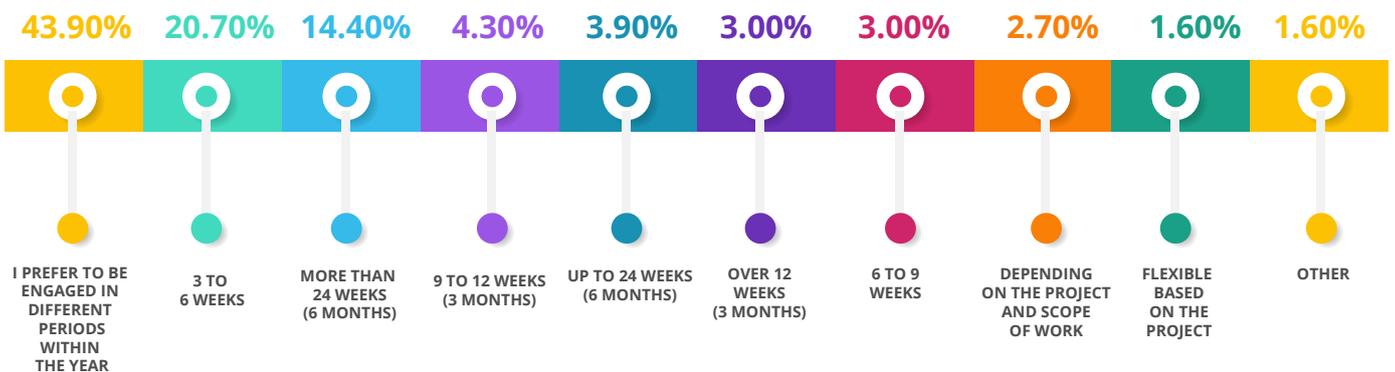
Figure 20. How would you be able to contribute if given the chance and opportunity?



For many respondents, the most preferred option for engagement would be certain times within the year, like 4 to 6 weeks at different time periods (44%). Around 21 percent reported that they would be able to commit from 3 to 6 weeks within the year in their home country. However, around 14 percent of respondents reported that provided the opportunity, they would engage for more than 6 months and potentially reside in the home country forever.

Time of the engagement of diaspora experts is one of the main elements mentioned by all interviewees, implying that despite the great will, for diaspora professionals it is important to balance their working time in resident countries and time of engagement or contribution in countries of origin. Therefore, it is very important to find the optimal modalities regarding the time of professional engagement in the countries of origin.

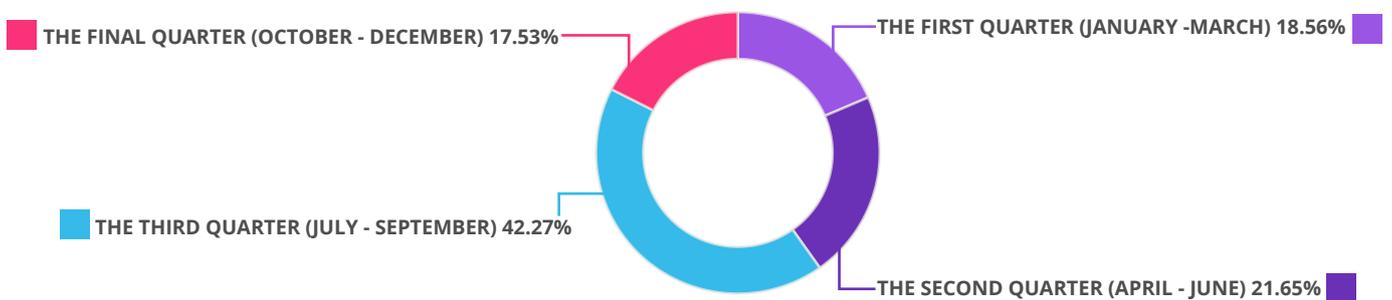
Figure 21. For what period of time would you be able to contribute to your home country?



The most preferred times of the year to engage were ranked the following based on the frequency of selected options: the third quarter (July-September) (58%), the second quarter (April-June) (30%), the first quarter

(January-March)(26%) and the final quarter (October-December) (24%). This means that summer months remain as the most preferred times for diaspora engagement where they could engage and offer their contribu-

Figure 22. Which period during the year best suits you to contribute to your country of origin?



In addition, more than half of the respondents would prefer to engage in transferring their knowledge and skills in Kosovo (56%), 30 percent would prefer to engage in Albania while four percent of the respondents would be

willing to engage with their professional expertise in both countries. A smaller share of respondents would be willing to contribute in Northern Macedonia and one percent in Presevo and one percent in Montenegro.

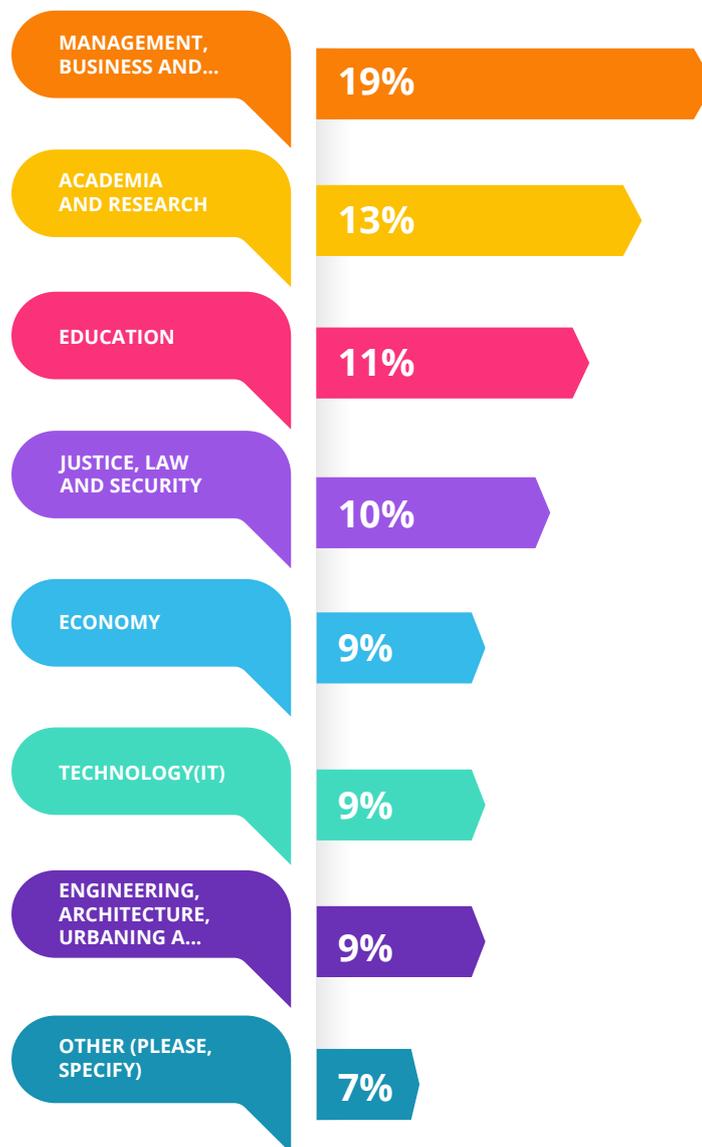
Figure 23. In which country would you prefer to engage in transferring your knowledge and skills (contribution)?



When it comes to different professional fields for contribution, results show that 19 percent of diaspora professionals can contribute to the field of Management, Business and Entrepreneurship while 13 percent would engage in Academia and Research.

Around 11 percent would engage in the field of Education while 10 percent can contribute in the field of Justice, Law and Security. Countries of origin can benefit from diaspora engagement in other fields as well including Technology, Engineering, Architecture and Urban Planning.

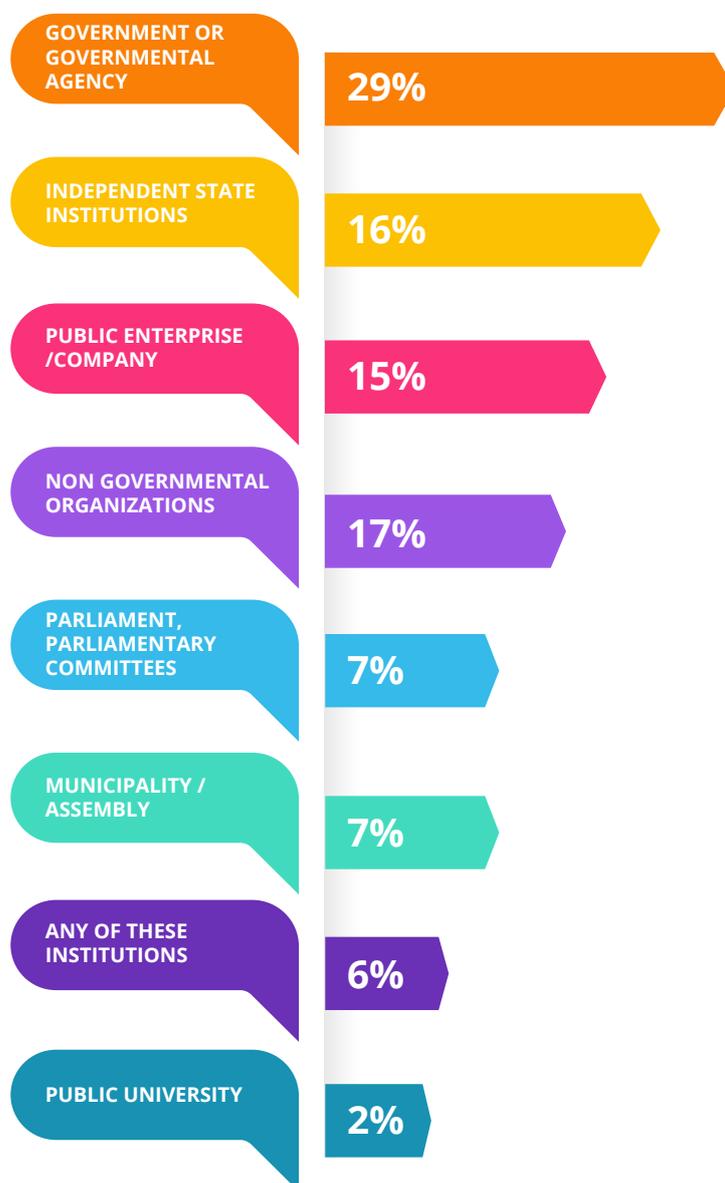
Figure 24. In which professional field could you contribute to your home country's development?



When asked about what institution or organization Diaspora professionals would prefer to engage in the country of origin, around 29 percent claimed Government or Governmental Agency followed by 17 percent who would like to be involved in non-governmental organizations. Around 16 percent of the

respondents would be willing to contribute to Independent State institutions while 15 percent are more interested to work for a Public Enterprise/Company. Slightly fewer respondents chose Municipality/Assembly, Parliament, and Public Universities as institutions in which they were willing to engage.

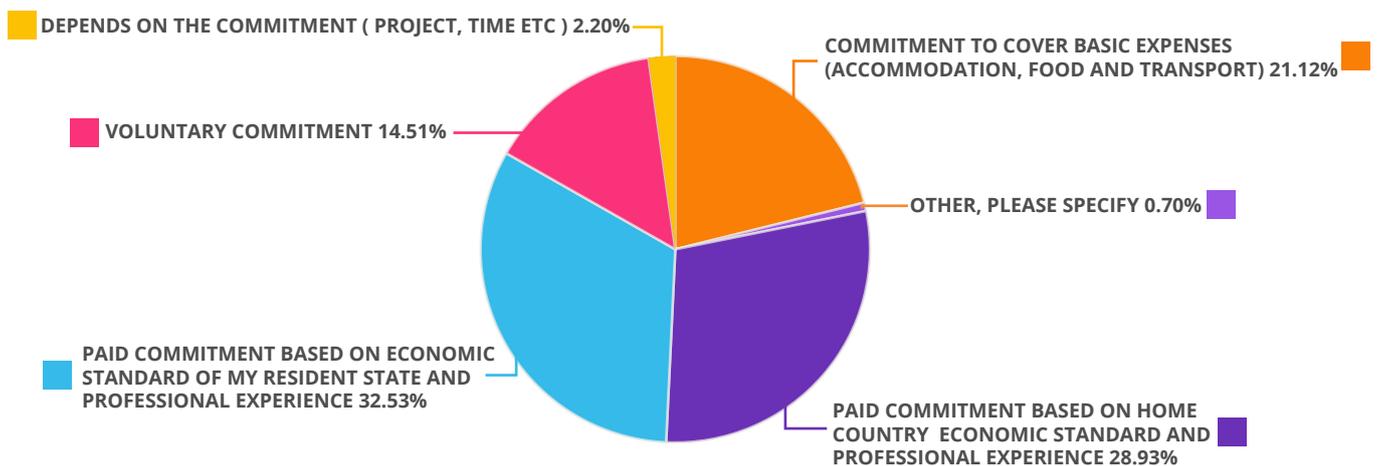
Figure 25. In which institution/organization would you prefer to engage with?



Around 32 percent of the respondents would be willing to engage as professionals in their home country provided that the commitment offers financial rewards according to the economic standards of the resident state and fits their professional expertise. Slightly fewer respondents reported that they would engage if the commitments offered financial

rewards as based on the home country's economic standard and their professional expertise. Around 21 percent claimed that as long as their basic expenses were covered during their commitment, they would join the initiative. And finally, 15 percent of respondents are willing to contribute as diaspora professionals in the form of voluntary commitment.

Figure 26. In what form do you think your contribution to the home country would be?

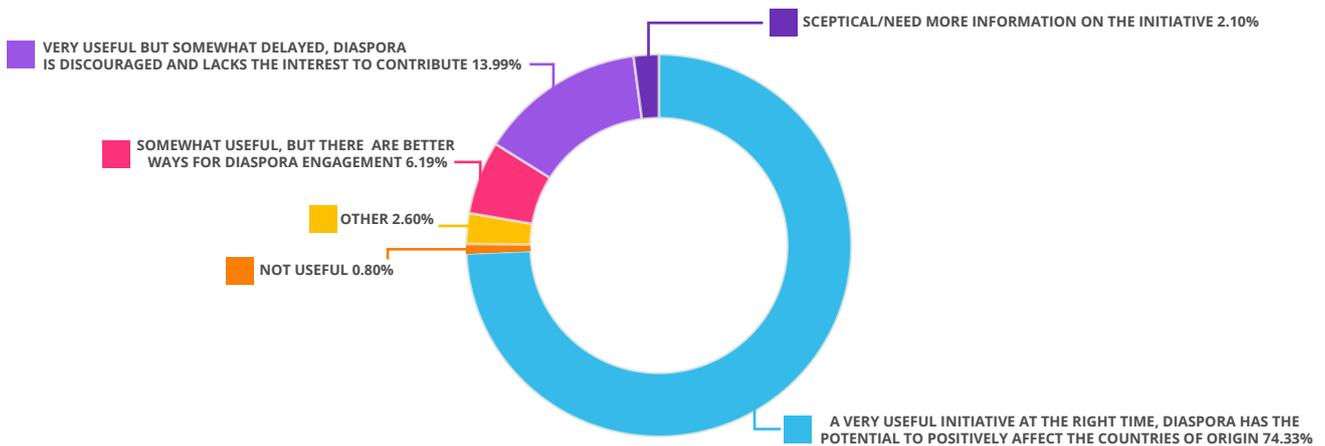


Engaging Diaspora Professionals Project and Future Commitment

The respondents were asked to provide their opinion regarding the initiative “Engaging Diaspora Professionals” as shown in the chart below. The majority believe that this is a very useful initiative at the right time considering that Diaspora has a lot of potential to positively affect the countries of origin. Slightly fewer respondents believe that the initiative is very useful but somewhat delayed because

Diaspora is somewhat discouraged and lacks the interest to contribute. Another six percent believe that the initiative is somewhat useful but there are better ways to initiate engagement of Diaspora in the home countries. Only one percent of the respondents think that the initiative is not useful, while two percent are skeptical and would need more information to be able to make a better assessment.

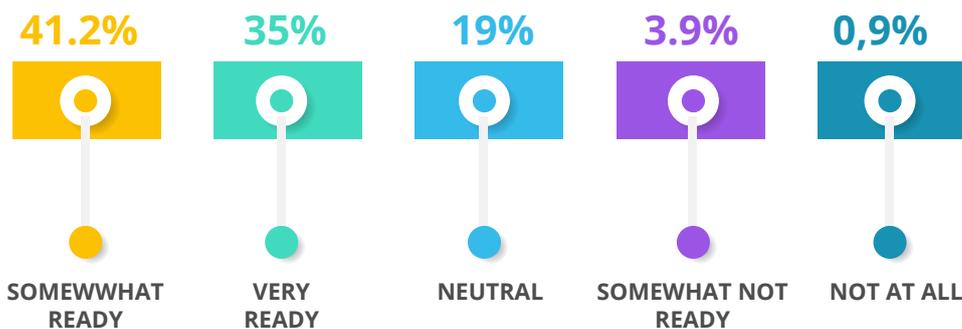
Figure 27. How would you describe the initiative “Engaging Diaspora Professionals”?



Around 76 percent of the participants in this study claimed to be ready and somewhat ready (76%) to offer their contribution to the

country of origin as compared to five percent who are not. In addition, 19 percent of the respondents hold neutral views regarding this initiative.

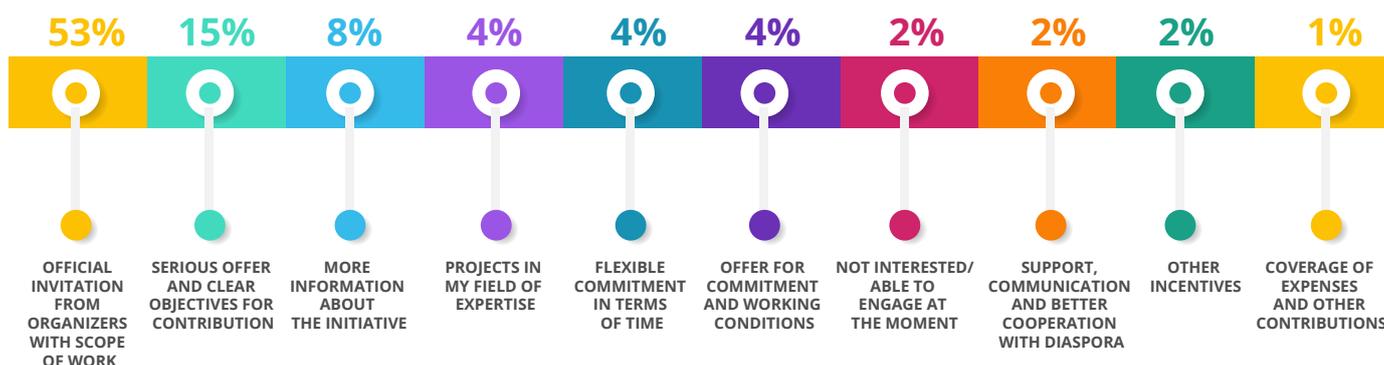
Figure 28. How ready are you to offer your contribution to your country of origin through the program “Engagement of Diaspora Professionals”?



The majority of the respondents would need some facilitation to engage through this program in the form of the official invitation from organizers with the scope of work (53%) and getting a serious offer with clear objectives for contribution through their work (15%). Apart from these incentives, around four percent of respondents would need an offer and working conditions cleared prior to engaging and

other four percent mentioned to have flexibility in terms of their commitment throughout the year as well as prior notice to make arrangements with their job in the resident state. Other incentives to be provided are projects in their field of expertise, a stable political and economic environment, and continuous support and collaboration with diaspora members.

Figure 29. What would you need to facilitate your engagement through this program?



Conclusions

Kosovo and Albania have large diasporas with great potential; however, this potential has remained mainly unexplored beyond remittances and financial support to the home countries. In order to best tailor the objectives of the project for successful collaboration, Germin conducted an online survey with 921 diaspora professionals residing abroad to assess their professional capacities and their willingness for future engagement in this project. In this case, diaspora professionals refer to 'diaspora experts as well-qualified and skilled people with a migration background who wish to support their country of origin by putting their expertise to good use', as defined by the Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM).

When it comes to the willingness of the professionals participating in this study to get involved in this project, results show that the majority are very ready and somewhat ready (76%) to offer their contribution to the country of origin as compared to five percent who are not. Most respondents claimed that they would be able to physically engage by visiting the home country or virtually through online platforms. This finding of the survey is significant as it shows an instant interest in commitment in any form for contribution and positive impact in the country of origin.

More than half of the respondents would need some facilitation to engage through this program in the form of the official invitation from organizers with the scope of work (53%) and getting a serious offer with clear objectives for contribution through their work (15%). Apart from these incentives, around

four percent of respondents would need an offer and working conditions cleared prior to engaging, and the other four percent mentioned to have flexibility in terms of their commitment throughout the year as well as prior notice to make arrangements with their job in the resident state.

Around one-third of the respondents would be willing to engage as professionals in their home country provided that the commitment offers financial rewards according to the economic standards of the resident state and fits their professional expertise.

For many respondents, the most preferred option for engagement would be certain times within the year, like 4 to 6 weeks at different time periods (44%). Around 21 percent reported that they would be able to commit from 3 to 6 weeks within the year in their home country. While, around 14 percent of respondents reported that provided the opportunity, they would engage for more than 6 months and potentially reside in the home country forever.

Many of the participants in this study claimed that they believe their skills can be very useful to the development of their country of origin (63%) while 27 percent believe their skills can be somewhat useful. While 54 percent believe they would be very and somewhat successful if they would return, 25 percent hold neutral views on this matter and 21 percent believe they would be somewhat not successful or not successful at all.

In addition, more than half of the respondents would prefer to engage in transferring their knowledge and skills in Kosovo (56%), 30 percent would prefer to engage in Albania while four percent of the respondents would be willing to engage with their professional expertise in both countries. The main fields of professional contribution from the diaspora are Management, Business and Entrepreneurship, as well as Academia and Research. Around 11 percent would engage in the field of Education, while 10 percent can contribute in the field of Justice, Law, and Security.

Apart from the fact that many of the diaspora professionals involved in the study reported having already settled in the countries abroad, this study shows that there is a willingness of diaspora professionals to engage and contribute, given the right incentives and serious organization of the project.

Recommendations

1. GET TO KNOW THE ALBANIAN DIASPORA PROFESSIONALS

State Institutions should utilize multiple data and information collection mechanisms to create a diaspora profile, which explains the main characteristics of the diaspora, their expertise, as well as the needs of diaspora members and organizations. Kosovo's and Albania's embassies and consulates should be more active in getting up-to-date information about the citizens living abroad.

This study reaffirms that the Albanian diaspora is very diverse in terms of professional background, but also reconfirms its strong ties and willingness to contribute to the countries of origin - the homelands. However, this survey's indicators derive from a small sample, and it is very necessary that the professional diaspora is known more and in detail. Without proper knowledge of diaspora profiles, it is very difficult for countries of origin to develop adequate policies for diaspora engagement.

1. EMPOWER THE DIASPORA GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The empowerment of diaspora groups and organizations is a very important factor that influences the diaspora's commitment towards a stronger and structured engagement with countries of origin. Diaspora-based and/or oriented organizations facilitate integration and provide support to migrants in both destination and sending countries. This makes them important actors, and that needs to be recognized and acknowledged. Therefore, we consider the empowerment of diaspora groups and organizations as a necessary process for the inclusive stakeholder

engagement in development. The empowerment means various forms of support, starting from the institutional to financial support provided to diaspora organizations to increase their capacities. The latter, for instance, can be provided through an intended government funding scheme, either provided by the government itself or other actors, such as international organizations or development agencies.

3. DEVELOP A MULTI-FUNCTIONAL PLATFORM THAT CONNECTS DIASPORA PROFESSIONALS' PROFILES WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

There is an urgent need for the government to collaborate with different groups (public and private) sectors in order to design a multi-functional platform that aims to rethink the engagement of our communities abroad and change the traditional way we have looked at our diaspora. This is particularly important because if we analyze in-depth countries that have a successful strategy (i.e. Ireland, Israel, India) it is due to their partnership and coordinated approach of multiple stakeholders engaged. Moreover, understanding the potential of this untapped human potential, we have to see the diaspora as an entry point, facilitator, and diplomatic asset.

4. CREATE SPACE FOR ENGAGEMENT OF DIASPORA PROFESSIONALS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF KOSOVO AND ALBANIA, WHICH FACE A LACK OF ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN KEY SECTORS

Given the lack of know-how in key sectors, the institutions of Kosovo and Albania are in dire need of expertise and mentoring. Both can very easily be acquired by diaspora professionals if the necessary space is created. The majority of the respondents and interviewees of this study believe that their skills and knowledge gained abroad would be very useful for the development of the countries of origin, and they are willing to contribute to transferring their know-how. Less than a quarter of them have had the opportunity to be professionally engaged in these countries, while half of a quarter have been invited.

The lack of exchange programs, as well as a closed and nepotistic culture of the public administration of the respective states are among the reasons that have not allowed space for diaspora expertise. That is why a high majority (74%) of respondents from this survey think that Germin's initiative (supported by GIZ), comes at the right time considering that Diaspora has a lot of potential to positively affect the countries of origin. Only a few believe that the initiative is very useful but somewhat delayed because Diaspora is somewhat discouraged and lacks the interest to contribute. In order to avoid the latter, state institutions in Kosovo and Albania should provide more space for diaspora professionals' engagement, especially in sectors that are lacking in terms of know-how skills.

5. IMPROVE THE COORDINATION BETWEEN DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNANCE AND INTER-STATE INSTITUTIONS, AND INCREASE THE INCLUSIVENESS IN THE DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Engaging diaspora is a complex process that cuts across many themes and sectors (economic, political, cultural and social). This process includes a range of national and local institutional bodies and levels. In this regard, identifying the right stakeholders, and coordination between different levels of governance and institutions is crucial. Furthermore, considering that Albanian diaspora's homeland orientation is directed to more than a country, its engagement is an issue of at least two states, therefore inter-state institutions' coordination is very much needed as well cooperation is an essential approach to support the development of comprehensive, sustainable, and future-oriented migration policies. The functioning of internal and external institutional coordination directly affects the effectiveness of diaspora engagement policies.

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